City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Design, Construction and Land Use
Diane M. Sugimura, Director

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE
NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
April 2, 2003

Project Number: **2301435**

Address: **200 West Comstock St**

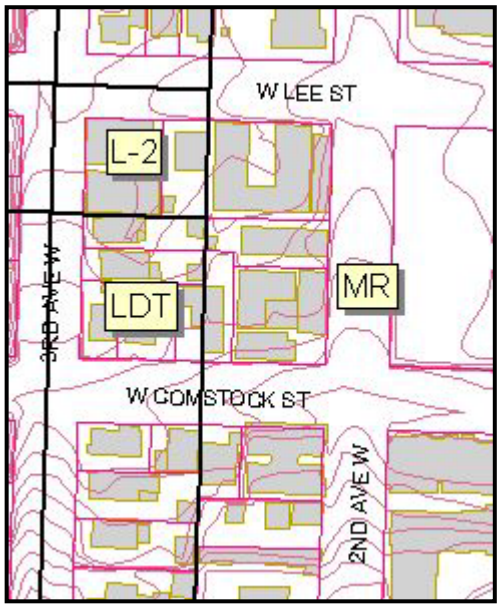
Applicant: **Chris Snell with Snell Partnership for Brian O'Connor**

Board Members Present: **Kathryn Armstrong**
Dan Foltz
Douglas McNutt
Jose Montano
Patricia Wilma

DCLU Staff Present: **Colin R. Vasquez, Land Use Planner**

BACKGROUND & VICINITY INFORMATION:

The applicant has applied for Design Review to redevelop a rectangular shaped site with a 23 unit, six-story residential building with a mix of one and two bedrooms and below grade parking for 31 vehicles. The 9,800 sq. ft. project site located at the northwest corner of West Comstock Street and 2nd Avenue West with 98' and 100' of street frontage respectively, descends five to eight feet from the northwest to southeast. Zoning for the site is multi-family residential Midrise (MR) with a 60' height limit. Adjacent zoning to the north, south and east is MR, west is multi-family residential Lowrise Duplex Triplex (LDT) and northwest is multi-family Lowrise 2 (L2). There are three two-story buildings housing a drug rehabilitation center currently on the site. The adjacent building to the north is a three-story multi-family residential use and to the west is a one- story multi-family residential use. To the south is a four-story apartment building and to the east is a private school.



ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION

At the Early Design Guidance meeting, the architect presented his site design analysis and development objectives to the Board and public. With the aid of photomontage's the architect presented the vicinity's rich architectural context and the site's challenges and opportunities. Emphasized in the presentation was the proposed use of brick and high quality exterior materials, sensitive treatment of landscaping and open space, and options for parking access. Additionally, two massing design diagrams were presented at the meeting. The first diagram illustrated a building compliant to structure width and depth, setbacks and modulation. The second diagram illustrated a building departing from structure width and depth, setbacks and modulation.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Eighteen members of the public attended the Early Design Guidance meeting. Their comments focused on the potential bulk and scale of building, exterior materials treatment of north and west facades, landscaping and open space for the north and west portions of the site, vehicle access/location and number of parking spaces to be provided.

DESIGN GUIDANCE PRIORITIES:

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provide the following siting and design guidance to be considered in the development of the site. The highest design guideline priorities for this project are identified by letter and number in accordance with the siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's *"Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily & Commercial Buildings," November 1998.* The identification of these particular guidelines does not imply that other, nonprioritized guidelines may not be called upon in the ultimate decision-making regarding this project.

A: Site Planning

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics. The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

The Board indicated this as a high priority and reminds the architect of their responsibility to maintain the existing high design quality standards and materials used in the surrounding neighborhood. The Board, generally pleased with the scope and quality of architect's design concept, asked that at the next Design Review meeting, more details be provided on the exterior features of the building and their relationship with the adjacent sites.

A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

At the next Design Review meeting, the architect should be prepared to present what the existing desirable characteristics are and how they should be acknowledged.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street. Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

The Board generally agreed with the location of the proposed primary residential entrance. For the next Design Review meeting, the Board will be looking for more details on the entrances.

A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites. Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

The proposed design should respect the presence of residents living in the LDT and L2 zones west and north of the proposed building and in the lower buildings in the MR zone north and south. An axonometric drawing should be prepared for the next Design Review board meeting to illustrate how the bays and balconies project into the setbacks support the architect's request for departures.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.

The project design should include creative use of landscaping, and/or window placement and treatment to provide privacy. Entrances should provide security and/or weather protection. The residential street frontages should provide features, which allow privacy while encouraging visual interaction with the street.

A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

At the next Design Review meeting, the Board wants the architect to present their design and rationale for open space, with a focus on the western and northern portions of the site.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access. Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

The Board is concerned about the sight triangle departure and the driveway width departure. At the next Design Review board meeting, the architect should be prepared to present his design and rationale for a reduced site triangle and reduced driveway for the proposed vehicle entrance on 2nd Ave. W. The Board is amenable to a considering a reduced width between 20' and 12', provided that pedestrian and vehicle access safety is achieved.

A-10 Corner Lots. Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

The project site offers a unique visual and physical access opportunity for the residential project and should relate to both street fronts. Corner architectural features are encouraged and parking access should not be located near the street corner.

B. HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE.

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility. Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less-intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

While "bleeding" the details of the street facing facades around to the non-street facing façades was not totally rejected by the Board, the architect should develop designs for all four facades. The majority of the Board stated their desire that all four facades should exhibit a unified form and provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less-intensive zones. The non-street facing facades should have a design treatment sufficient to achieve a reasonable transition to the west and north and mitigation of height and scale between the anticipated development potential of the site and the adjacent zones.

A tripartite façade should be considered for the building geometry, to pick up the two-story and four-story scale of the buildings in the neighborhood. Materials changes between floors must be cautiously considered.

Generally, the Board liked the proportions shown in the architect's sketch perspective, but lowering the belt course from 5th floor to the 4th floor might be a move in the wrong direction.

C. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS and MATERIALS

C-1 Architectural Context. New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

The Board was pleased with the architect's remarks regarding their interest in integrating their project into the existing urban fabric and reinforcing the rich context of the neighborhood. The Board looks forward to reviewing material samples and color perspective renderings and working with the applicant's development objectives, while adhering to zoning and code requirements. See C-4 below.

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency. Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its façade walls.

See B-1 above.

C-3 Human Scale. The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.

At the next Design Review board meeting, the architect should be prepared to present their design and rationale for the architectural features and design elements that are oriented to human activity. Bay windows extending out from the building face, window patterns and building articulation, and landscaping along W. Comstock St. and 2nd Ave. W. should be of a human-proportion. See B-1 above.

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials. Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

At the next Design Review meeting the architect should provide more details on the textures, patterns and colors to be used on the building's exteriors. All materials shall be highly durable and maintainable. The use of brick is preferred over materials that would be more difficult to integrate into the existing neighborhood residential setting.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

The Board agrees with the architect on the location of the vehicle access on 2nd Ave. W. See A-8 and A-10 above.

D. <u>PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT</u>

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

The space between the building and the public right-of-way ought to be conducive to residential or pedestrian activities. In neighborhoods where pedestrian activity is desired, the function of any open space between the building and sidewalk is to provide visual and physical access to the building and provide space for outdoor activities.

D-2 Blank Walls. Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

A wall may be considered "large" if it has a blank surface substantially greater in size than similar walls of neighboring buildings. A blank wall or walls provide opportunities for defacement with graffiti. Possible methods for treating blank walls include installation of vertical trellis with climbing vines or plant materials; or providing a landscaped or raised planter bed in front of the wall and including plant materials that grow to obscure or screen the wall's surface.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas. Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and

screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

Unsightly service elements can detract from a well designed building and create hazards for pedestrians and vehicles. Considerations to address in locating service areas and utilities are; locating the features in the least visible location on the site, with service openings away from primary pedestrian/vehicle access and public sidewalks, and the use of durable materials that complement the building.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

The project's design elements should promote and reinforce the security of the residents, visitors and neighbors with techniques that include adequate lighting, clear lines of sight, avoidance of walls that do not permit observations, landscaping that maintains visibility, the use of semi-transparent security screening, careful placement of secondary structures to avoid hiding places for criminal activity, and well designed vehicle access that avoids pedestrian and/or vehicle impacts.

E. LANDSCAPING

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites. Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

The project's landscaping materials should reinforce any distinctive patterns or species found within the local context; one way to define and reinforce the streetscape character of neighborhoods is by the use of street trees.

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site. Landscaping including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

The project's landscaping should include distinctive landscaping features that complement the form of the building and increases privacy and security for the residents and reinforces or enhances the adjacent properties and streetscape. Screening, shading, trellises or arbors provide places for plants to grow on. Decorative paving and lighting enhancements should be considered into the design of the project.

E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions. The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.

Given the site proximity to near-by less-intensive zones, special attention should be given to landscaping as a means of transition. Naturalized or native landscape materials can make a project seem more like an established part of its neighborhood.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURE Matrix

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD REQUIREMENT	REQUEST/ PROPOSAL	JUSTIFICATION	ACTION
Structure width and depth SMC 23.45.052 Maximum Depth. The maximum depth of an apartment structure shall be sixty-five percent of lot depth. SMC 23.45.052B.1.c.	**Proposes a structure depth greater than sixty-five percent of lot depth.**		**Requires further review by the Board**
Modulation requirements SMC 23.45.054 Modulation of structure facades shall be required subject to the following criteria: ▪ Front Facades shall be modulated if the façade width exceeds forty feet. SMC 23.45.054A.1. ▪ Side Facades on corner lots, which face the street, shall be modulated if greater than forty feet in width. SMC 23.45.054B.1. ▪ Apartments with a structure depth greater than sixty-five percent of lot depth shall be modulated along all side facades, according to the standards of SMC 23.54.052D. ▪ The minimum depth shall be eight feet. SMC 23.54.052D.1. ▪ The minimum width shall be ten feet. SMC 23.45.052D.2. ▪ The maximum width shall be forty feet.	**Proposes to provide the same area of modulation via longer and shallower recess.**	▪ To create a well-proportioned façade with modulation in keeping with existing buildings in the neighborhood. See sheet A7.0 Context Photos[1].	**Requires further review by the Board**
Setback requirements SMC 23.45.056C. The required side setback shall be determined by structure depth and height according to SMC Table 23.45.056A.	**Proposes balconies and bay windows projecting beyond the walls of the building.**	▪ Bays and balconies add more interest to the façade and creates modulation in keeping with the scale of the building and the existing buildings in the neighborhood.	**Requires further review by the Board**

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURE Matrix, continued

Parking & Access SMC 23.45.060 See Driveways and Sight Triangles below.	**See below**		
Driveways. Driveway requirements for residential uses SMC 23.54.030D.1.e. Driveways serving more than thirty parking spaces shall provide a minimum twenty foot wide driveway for two way traffic.	**A minimum of 10'**		**Requires further review by the Board**
Sight Triangles. SMC 23.54.030G.2. A sight triangle on the side of the driveway used as an exit shall be unobstructed for a distance of ten feet from the intersection of the driveway with the sidewalk.	**Less than 10' by 10'**		**Requires further review by the Board**

Signature: (signature on file) Date: July 29, 2003
Colin R. Vasquez, Land Use Planner
Department of Design, Construction and Land Use

[1] Refer to 11" by 17" plans dated 3-14-2003 in Master Use Permit file 2301435.